



Department  
for Education

# Studio schools in 2015 and beyond

How to apply

February 2014

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# 1. Vision

1.1 We want to improve our education system so that all children thrive and prosper, regardless of their background. The studio schools programme, alongside free schools and University Technical Colleges, is helping us realise this vision. By introducing increased competition, innovation and parental choice, we aim to raise standards across the school system.

1.2 To ensure that we establish high quality studio schools, we place a great emphasis on

- the capacity and capability of the proposer group, including
  - relevant education and financial expertise; and
  - track record of those among the proposer group who run existing education provision.
- the quality of the provision when the studio school is open, including
  - the academic rigour and aspiration of the education offer;
  - strong governance structures and governing body; and
  - the likelihood of being graded good or better by Ofsted in the first inspection.

1.3 We are inviting applications to establish studio schools that will provide high quality, aspirational, education for 14-19 years olds using project-based learning to deliver mainstream qualifications, develop students' employability skills and prepare them for work, or further or higher education. Studio schools should encourage innovation and be driven by the vision and passion of those proposing the school.

1.4 We will fund studio schools that are proposed by the strongest groups in areas where new schools are needed most, by employers and by parents and students. Studio schools must provide value for money, especially in periods when capital funding is limited.

1.5 This guidance is for groups who would like to establish a studio school in line with the model established and promoted by the Studio Schools Trust (SST). Applicant groups who wish to establish something different from the SST model may be interested in applying to set up a mainstream or 16-19 free school, a special free school or an alternative provision free school. In this case you should refer to the relevant guidance available [here](#). This guidance contains a number of technical terms and you may find it useful to refer to the glossary in [Annex B](#).

## **What has changed since the last application round?**

1.6 We have placed an even greater emphasis on your education plans and the contributions your partner organisations will provide both in establishing your studio school and after it has opened.

1.7 Applicant groups will need to submit detailed, robust and deliverable education plans, which demonstrate an excellent understanding of both pre-and post-16 provision and the new accountability measures.

1.8 We have introduced an additional criterion (D2) that covers the specific elements of the studio school model including project based learning, work placements and the CREATE framework.

1.9 We still expect you to demonstrate clearly the capacity and capability of your applicant group, the organisations they represent and the need for your studio school.

1.10 Applicant groups will continue to submit a main application of no more than 20 pages, and the total length of the application should be between 50 and 100 pages including both the main application and any annexes.

## **What is a studio school?**

1.11 Studio schools are all-ability and mixed sex state funded schools, independent of local authorities. They are an innovative new model of educational provision, delivering mainstream qualifications through practical project-based learning. They are not extensions or conversions from existing provision, but are new 14-19 academies, typically with around 300 pupils.

1.12 Studio schools offer academic and vocational qualifications, but teach them in a practical and project-based way. Study is combined with work placements with local and national employers who are involved in the school. Learning in this way encourages students to develop employability skills like punctuality, good communication, reliability and team working, whilst gaining a strong grounding in English, maths and science. These new schools, which are set up with the backing of local businesses and employers, are part of the government's drive to ensure the education system responds to demands from employers for the skills they need to grow and prosper. Employers say that ensuring our young people have these important skills should be a top education priority for the government.

1.13 Further information about the characteristics of a studio school can be obtained from the Studio Schools Trust (SST) [here](#). Studio schools are funded on a comparable basis to other state funded schools.

## Studio schools: law and policy

1.14 Every studio school must comply with the legal and policy framework which governs the development of the studio schools programme. There are three main sources of legal requirements for all studio schools:

- Independent School Standards legislation;
- the funding agreement; and
- relevant regulation and codes of practice specific to the type of school.

1.15 **Independent School Standards:** studio schools are academies, and as such, they are independent schools to which the relevant Independent School Standards apply. The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2012 are available [here](#).

1.16 **The funding agreement:** Each studio school will enter into a contract with the Secretary of State termed the ‘funding agreement’<sup>1</sup>. In order to receive funding from the Secretary of State, studio schools must follow the arrangements and standards set out in the funding agreement. The model funding agreement documents can be found [here](#) and only in exceptional circumstances will the Secretary of State deviate from this model<sup>2</sup>. A copy of the Academies Financial Handbook can be found [here](#). Studio schools must abide by this document and it is important that you understand this information.

1.17 You should be aware of the following key requirements. Studio schools must

- adopt fair practices and arrangements that are in accordance with the [School Admissions Code](#), the [School Admissions Appeals Code](#) and the admissions law as it applies to maintained schools;
- follow the statutory assessment (i.e. testing) arrangements as they apply to maintained schools;

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<sup>1</sup> For simplicity we use ‘funding agreement’ throughout the application documents to refer to the formal legal agreement between the academy trust and the Secretary of State. In addition to the funding agreement, the law allows the Secretary of State to fund academies (including studio schools) by payment of grant.

<sup>2</sup> A Plain English version of the model funding agreement will be available later this year.

- collect performance data, publish results and be subject to Ofsted section 5 inspection under the same framework that applies to all maintained schools;
- have regard to the [Special Educational Needs Code of Practice](#) which will be re-issued following passage of the Children and Families Bill in 2014. All mainstream schools and further education institutions will be under a duty to admit children and young people where the school or FE institution is named in an Education, Health and Care plan; and
- provide a broad and balanced curriculum<sup>3</sup> including the core subjects of English, mathematics, and science and make provision for the teaching of religious education and a daily act of collective worship.

#### 1.18 Studio schools do not have to

- follow the national curriculum;
- employ teachers with qualified teacher status<sup>4</sup>;
- follow local authority term dates or standard school hours; or
- comply with the provisions in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document.

1.19 Studio schools are judged against the same accountability framework as other schools. Last year the department announced changes to the key stage 4 accountability framework; the new headline measure that will be in place from 2016 will track students' progress from the end of key stage 2 to the end of key stage 4. Further details can be found [here](#). Following a recent consultation, the department is due to publish the new key stage 5 accountability framework in the spring. The consultation proposed including a progress measure analogous to the key stage 4 measure. One subsidiary key stage 5 measure will be the Technical Baccalaureate, or 'Tech Bacc'. The department has also published a list of [high quality vocational qualifications](#) that will count in the key stage 4 and key stage 5 performance tables. The list applies to courses taught from September 2014. Studio schools may also wish to offer other qualifications in addition, for instance professional certificates valued by employers.

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<sup>3</sup> The curriculum must (a) promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, must (b) prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life and must (c) include English, mathematics and science.

<sup>4</sup> With the exception of a Special Educational Needs Coordinator and the school's designated lead for looked after children, although please note that certain head teachers may hold these roles without having QTS.

**1.20 Existing education providers among your proposer group** – Applications are invited from groups that have identified evidence of employer, parent and student need. We expect the proposer group to have a sound understanding of the education context at key stage 4 and key stage 5 and how the studio school will establish and maintain high quality education provision. We welcome studio school applications from groups including existing education providers with strong track records. We will look at the popularity and the quality of provision at the existing school(s)/college(s) and we expect the existing provision to have been judged at least good overall in its last Ofsted inspection, and to have above average results at key stage 2 (if applicable), at GCSE, including English and mathematics, and at key stage 5. We will also assess the existing school/college's financial record and capacity to set up a new school.



## 2. Getting started

2.1 Setting up and running a studio school is challenging and requires a lot of time, commitment and determination. Before you start your application, you should think about

- the law and policy as they apply to studio schools;
- the local need, from employers, parents, and students, for the particular studio school you want to set up;
- the level of involvement, at both the individual and organisational levels, which each party, including employers, will have in setting up and running the studio school;
- the relevant skills and experience each party has to set up and run a studio school;
- whether you need to access any additional expertise and how you might secure this; and
- potential sites for your studio school.

2.2 [The Studio Schools Trust](#) (SST), an independent charity, established the studio school model. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their application with SST, who will be able to offer advice and support

## Organising your group

2.3 Applicant groups will need to look at what needs to be done, both on a short term basis (submitting the full application and, if approved, preparing for the studio school to open) and long term basis (strategic running of the studio school as well as day-to-day management). Groups will need to organise themselves based on the skills, experience and time commitment of individual members, so that the group is deployed and governed in the most effective way. Groups may be able to identify external organisations or individuals who are willing to provide them with support free of charge.

2.4 You will need to demonstrate that your group has sufficient capacity and capability and a good track record to deliver your studio school through pre-opening. In particular, this means you must have the education expertise at both pre-and post-16 to build the school's education plan and measure its success; finance expertise to create the school's financial plan; project management expertise to ensure the project's successful progress; and communications and marketing expertise to build and maintain support among prospective students and their parents. Groups may also appoint a third party to provide support through an open and competitive tender

process. However, you **must not** enter into any contracts in the expectation of public funds. If you have been assisted in writing your application by any individuals or organisations that are not part of your trust, you should explain how you will secure such support if you are approved.

2.5 Each studio school must be established on a solid legal footing and be underpinned by strong corporate governance arrangements, including for financial oversight. Each studio school is run by an academy trust, a charitable company limited by guarantee, formed specifically to establish and run a studio school<sup>5</sup>. 'Limited by guarantee' means that the personal liabilities of the members who establish it are restricted. The academy trust is the body that submits the application to open the studio school.

2.6 An academy trust is made up of members and directors. The members are the trust's legal owners. To set up your trust you will need three or more members, referred to as the 'founding members'.

2.7 The members appoint the trust's directors, and you will need to name at least one director to set up your trust. The trust's directors are responsible for oversight of the day-to-day management of the trust and governance of the studio school.

2.8 A note on terminology - **an academy trust's company directors are also its trustees (for the purposes of charity law) and the governors of the academy**; the terms are interchangeable. Where we refer to governors in this guidance, we are also talking about your directors and trustees<sup>6</sup>. Multi-academy trusts can create and delegate decision making powers to local governing bodies, to run individual academies, but the members of a local governing body are not automatically classed as company directors or trustees.

2.9 Members are not always governors, but can take on both roles so long as a majority of the governors are not also members. This ensures clear lines of accountability between the two groups running the trust.

## Establishing your academy trust

2.10 To establish your academy trust, your founding members will need to sign legal documents called a memorandum of association and articles of association. The articles set out the trust's constitution and provide a framework for its governance

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<sup>5</sup> This is a requirement under the Academies Act 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Charity Commission guidance on the role of trustees can be found [here](#)

arrangements. The articles will be published as an annex to your trust's funding agreement, so it will be a public document once your studio school opens.

2.11 The department's [model articles](#) take into account best practice in corporate, charity and school governance. For this reason the department expects applicant groups to establish their academy trust using the model articles before they apply to open a studio school.

2.12 You need to submit a completed model memorandum and articles of association to Companies House, along with an application to register a company and the relevant fee. [Information](#) on how to set up a company is available from Companies House.

2.13 The department's model articles include a 'charitable object'. This means that your trust will become a charity from the moment it is registered with Companies House (the date of incorporation). Once your studio school opens (on the first day of term) your company will become an 'exempt' charity. This means that it will be regulated by the Secretary of State, as are all academies. The [Academies Financial Handbook](#) provides more information on requirements on academy trusts resulting from this. You are not required to and should not register your company, its members or governors (directors/trustees) with the Charity Commission.

## **Financial accountability**

2.14 Academy trusts are subject to public accountability requirements. They must ensure public money is used effectively and comply with a number of legal requirements and UK Government regulations.

2.15 All academy trusts must appoint an accounting officer, usually the principal, who is personally responsible to Parliament and to the accounting officer of the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for the resources under their control. They must establish appropriate financial management, governance and audit arrangements in accordance with the requirements of the Academies Financial Handbook. The EFA is responsible for providing assurance to Parliament that the funds it has provided to studio schools have been used for the purposes intended. Assurance is primarily sought and gained through the financial returns made by studio schools.

2.16 As companies limited by guarantee, academy trusts must prepare annual financial statements and submit them to Companies House within the required deadlines. The Academies Accounts Direction is published annually and sets out the form which academy financial statements must take, incorporating the requirements of company, charity and public sector financial reporting. The model studio school funding agreement requires academy trust financial statements to be

audited by an external auditor and submitted to the Secretary of State via the EFA by 31 December each year.

2.17 Academy trusts must also submit an annual budget return to the EFA. As public sector bodies within the Department for Education accounting boundary, academy trust budget forecasts and financial results are consolidated into the EFA and the department's forecasts and results for the purpose of providing expenditure estimates to Parliament and for the Whole of Government Accounts, a legal obligation on the UK public sector. The National Audit Office is the group auditor for the Department for Education.

2.18 These regulations require that all potential suppliers are given a fair opportunity to seek business and make competitive offers. Therefore, there can be **no guarantee** that organisations or individuals offering support in the preparation of applications will be offered contracts should the application be approved.

## Conflicts of interest

2.19 One of the most important tests of a trust's capability is how well it plans to and manages conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest can be defined as 'Any situation in which a person's personal interests, or interests that they owe to another body, may (or may appear or be perceived to) influence or affect their decision making.'

2.20 Conflicts are most likely to arise when a trust is considering awarding a contract to an individual or organisation in which one of its members or governors has an interest. By considering your plans for contracting work (pre-and post-opening) you will be able to act before forming your trust and recruiting your governing body to minimise the risks of a conflict. This will include ensuring that

- bodies that sponsor or promote schools do not derive a financial profit from doing so;
- any individual or organisation represented as a member of the trust, or with influence over the trust, understands that they will only be able to bid for contracts from the trust on an 'at cost' basis. This is in line with the approach taken by the department with approved academy sponsors;
- there is sufficient challenge within the trust, with independent members and governors, capable of holding suppliers to account;
- governors and members comply with the protocols set out at articles 6, 98 and 99 of the model articles. These protocols ensure that decisions are taken without bias and that individuals who are 'conflicted' take steps to avoid influencing a decision;

- the governors establish and maintain a register of interests to identify and record potential areas of conflict; and
- governors and members understand the need for all procurement to follow an open and fair competition. Our website provides guidance on procurement [here](#). The [Academies Financial Handbook](#) also includes guidance on conflicts of interest and appropriate procurement.

2.21 Conflicts of interest may also arise if family or other personal relationships between the individuals running an academy trust make it hard to hold an individual to account.

2.22 It is important to note that even the **perception** of a conflict can create negative publicity and could affect your studio school's reputation and ability to recruit pupils.

## Recruiting governors

2.23 The application process also asks you to confirm how many governors you will appoint, and to provide information on any individuals you have already appointed as governors. It may seem logical to assume that your project group will become the governing body, but **the challenges of pre-opening are different from those faced by the governors of an open studio school**. No matter how vital a contribution you believe someone will make during pre-opening, you should not guarantee them a seat on your governing body. As a guide, a governor will be expected to do the following:

- have the confidence to challenge the senior leadership team of the school, acting as a critical friend to maintain focus on improvement, and holding them to account;
- use attainment and other data (in particular the Ofsted [dashboard](#) and [RAISE](#) online) to assess the school's progress, strengths and weaknesses;
- be independent of mind, with the confidence and experience to drive through change, for example in making the case for, and implementing the freedoms open to academy trusts around the curriculum and the school day;
- use financial and workforce data to inform decision making about the trust's spending commitments, to ensure the trust makes appropriate and effective use of public money; and
- maintain the highest professional standards as a governor, exemplifying the [seven principles of public life](#) as set out by the Nolan Committee.

2.24 The number of governors should be determined solely by the experience and skills needed to manage your academy trust and drive improvement in your studio school. Large governing bodies should be avoided because they usually make

focused discussion and clear decisions harder to achieve. Ofsted recommend no more than 12 governors.

2.25 In your articles, you will need to specify how many governors will be appointed by the members. You should also specify how many additional governors the governing body will be able to appoint, using the co-option provisions in the Articles (noting that co-opted governors cannot take part in decisions to co-opt other governors).

2.26 You may find that accommodating every stakeholder and supporter on the governing body takes you above 12 governors. However there are other ways to engage people with expertise, or (for instance) additional employers, by using committees and advisory bodies. For example, you might ask someone with HR experience to join a finance and resources sub-committee, or you might create informal advisory bodies to give a voice to community groups, parents or pupils.

**2.27 You will not be expected to have filled your entire governing body by the start of pre-opening.** A governor's term of office is four years, so it is better to take time in pre-opening to recruit high calibre governors with the right skills for an open studio school. You can recruit your parent governors during the first term after opening. You will be expected to have carried out a skills audit to assess what strengths and gaps exist across your project group and among your proposed governing body. Please note that all governors, however they are appointed or elected, must be formally appointed as directors of the trust; and that a person who is not a director cannot act as a governor.

## **Existing single-academy trusts and multi-academy trusts applying for a new studio school**

2.28 As an existing academy trust you will already have articles of association in place, although you may need to move to the department's model multi-academy articles if you only currently run one school. You should not update your articles until you have been approved into pre-opening.

2.29 As an existing academy trust you will also have an established governing body and your members and governors will have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities. However, you will still need to demonstrate in your application that your trust has the capacity to put in place effective governance structures and, to support and challenge your new studio school, both through pre-opening and once it opens.

## Suitability of applicants and applications

2.30 The Secretary of State will seek to ensure that only suitable persons are permitted to establish publicly funded studio schools and will seek confirmation that no member or director of the academy trust has been barred from Regulated Activity<sup>7</sup>. He will consider each application on its merits, and take into account all matters relevant to the application. He will reject any applications put forward by organisations which advocate violence or other illegal activities, or by individuals associated with such organisations. In order to be approved, applications will need to demonstrate that those individuals who will act as members and governors, and the school itself, will ensure that principles are promoted which support fundamental British values, including: respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England; respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes; support for equality of opportunity for all; support and respect for the liberties of all within the law; and respect for and tolerance of different faiths and religious and other beliefs.

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<sup>7</sup> Regulated Activity within the meaning given by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

## 3. Preparing and submitting your application

### What happens when

Application window	Likely interview Period	Successful applicants announced
9am on 5 May – 12 noon on 9 May 2014	16 June – 1 July 2014	summer 2014

3.1 Completed applications **must** be submitted to us within the application window listed in the table above. Please note that any applications received outside these times will be considered in the next round.

### Submitting your application

3.2 You must submit **Sections A-H**, (Word and Excel documents), within the application window for them to be considered.

3.3 You need to submit a **copy by email** to [StudioSchools.APPLICATIONS@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:StudioSchools.APPLICATIONS@education.gsi.gov.uk), copying in the Studio Schools Trust on [applications@studioschoolstrust.org](mailto:applications@studioschoolstrust.org). Please note that the size of your email should not exceed 9MB. Anything larger than this will not be delivered. If the application is larger than 9MB you should split the documents and send two emails, clearly flagging in the email subject line that you have done so.

3.4 You also need to submit **two hard copies** by ‘**Recorded Signed For**’ delivery to Studio Schools Applications Team, Department for Education, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT

And **one hard copy** by post to

The Studio Schools Trust, Duplex 5, Ducie House, 37 Ducie Street, Manchester M1 2 JW

3.5 It is essential that the hard copies you provide are identical to the electronic version you email.



## 4. Application assessment and interviews

### Assessment of your application

4.1 We will assess your application

- against the criteria set out below;
- against other studio school applications; and
- against a range of contextual factors including value for money and how your proposed school will make use of academy freedoms to improve standards in the local area.

4.2 It is essential that you read the assessment criteria before starting your application. Under each criterion we have included a description of what you should include in your application.

4.3 All criteria are important and groups should complete their entire application with care and consideration. The capacity and capability of your group and the need for your school will both be critical to your studio school's success. Therefore, we will look at these two elements of your application first. **If your group's capacity or capability is not strong – including if you have a poor track record as an established provider – or are unable to demonstrate a clear need for the school, it is likely that your application will not be considered further and you may not get feedback on the other sections. We expect applicants to set out clearly how each partner organisation, including employers, and their named representatives will engage with the studio school both in pre-opening and once open.**

4.4 If you plan to use policies from another school or education provider you must be transparent about that (cite your sources), and explain your rationale for doing so. If you do not and we subsequently discover you have sourced material from elsewhere, you may not receive any scores for that section of your application.

### Interviews

4.5 If your application is assessed as one of the strongest, we will invite your group to interview. Please see above for the period which we expect to hold interviews.

4.6 Interviews will be tailored based on the quality of the application, and the strength and track record of the proposer group.

## Decisions and pre-opening

4.7 We set out above when we expect to announce decisions.

4.8 If the Secretary of State decides your application should progress to the pre-opening stage, we will provide you with a dedicated point of contact from the Department for Education, along with support from the EFA to help secure a site and open your school.

**4.9 Please note that approval of your application does not mean approval of every detail, including your financial plans, proposed site or budget.** Approval may be conditional on amending certain aspects of your application.

4.10 There will be a **significant** amount of work to complete between the approval of your studio school application and your studio school opening. Therefore, you should be clear that every member of your group is able to commit the time necessary to do this. If you employ a principal designate, senior staff, or procure project management support, you will need to oversee their work.

4.11 We will provide a project development grant of £300,000 to groups whose applications are approved to the next stage. This grant is to help cover everything that groups will need to buy up to the point that the studio school opens. This will include the cost of any project management and education support required and other costs such as recruiting and paying a principal designate. This grant will supplement the pro-bono contributions and resources of the studio school sponsors. The project development grant does not cover capital costs and this is funded separately. We will ask you to submit a budget plan to show how you will spend this money in pre-opening and we will ask you to submit regular statements of expenditure. Trusts that have been approved for multiple projects opening in the same academic year will receive the full funding for the first project and will be funded at a reduced rate of £200,000 for each additional project. The reduced rate will also apply to projects that are approved for pre-opening in future application rounds where they are opening in the same academic year. For more detail on project development grant funding, see **Annex A**.

4.12 Assuming you make good progress after your application is approved, the Secretary of State will then decide whether to enter into a funding agreement with you. In previous rounds some applications have been approved after interview but then failed to progress sufficiently. In some cases a funding agreement could not be signed, the project did not go ahead and the studio school did not open. In other cases, the opening of the studio school had to be delayed by a year. This demonstrates the immense importance and challenge of the pre-opening phase.

## Appeals and reapplying

4.13 Decisions by the Secretary of State are final and there is no formal appeals process.

4.14 If your application is not successful, you will receive a feedback letter giving more information about the judgement.

4.15 If you are reapplying after being unsuccessful in a previous round, we expect you to demonstrate under the relevant section of your new application how you have changed your application in response to the feedback you received. If this feedback is not addressed, it is likely that your application will not be considered further, and you may not get full feedback on any new application.

## 5. Application form sections and criteria

5.1 Personal data is collected on the Word and Excel application forms in order to consider an application to set up a studio school and will not be used for other purposes. For the purposes of the Data Protection Act, the Department for Education is the data controller for this personal information and for ensuring that it is processed in accordance with the terms of the Act. The department will hold all personal information you supply securely and will only make it available to those who need to see it as part of the studio school application process. All personal information supplied in these forms will only be retained for as long as it is needed for this process.

5.2 Your Word application should have a main narrative of **no more than 20 pages** and the whole form must be no more than 100 pages. The following elements are not part of the 20 page limit for the narrative, but do count towards the 100 page overall limit:

- the **tables**, whether in Word or Excel;
- the **annexes**; and
- sections **F5** and **F6** describing the track record of existing providers and capacity to expand, which will only be applicable to some applicant groups.

### Section A: Applicant details

5.3 In this section (in Excel) we ask you for basic information about your group and your company limited by guarantee. There are no assessment criteria for this section.

5.4 As companies limited by guarantee, certain details will be publicly available on the Companies House website. However, the personal information you provide in **Section A** will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

### Section B: Outline of the school

5.5 In this section (in Excel) we ask you for key details on the studio school you are proposing. There are no assessment criteria for this section.

### Section C: Education vision

5.6 Your education vision should describe why you want to set up your particular studio school in the particular area you have identified, its core features and the

pupils you intend to cater for. You should tell us in your own words about the overarching vision for your studio school and how it informs your education plan. Your application should be coherent and consistent throughout and work together as a cohesive whole. You will need to demonstrate in later sections that the vision is both deliverable and affordable within the funding allocated to studio schools.

**C1: A credible proposal to deliver a high quality studio school and a clear rationale for establishing it in this area, including showing how the studio school will be separate and distinctive from any of the sponsors**

Free text in the Word template. You must

- include a brief explanation of why you are seeking to establish your studio school in this particular area. Please explain why you have selected the key features of your studio school including its location and approach to teaching and learning;
- provide a detailed explanation of the rationale for the proposed specialism(s), including how they are based on national and local demand from employers and specifically how they will lead to employment opportunities which require the knowledge and skills the studio school will teach;
- demonstrate that your vision is deliverable (this will be assessed across your whole application but needs to be clearly set out in this section), and consistent with the rest of your application;
- show how your studio school will offer a high quality education (e.g. that you have set high ambitions for standards of teaching and pupil outcomes); and
- explain how your studio school will be a clearly separate institution in governance terms, and offer a distinctive curriculum, from any existing provision run by members of your group.

We will assess the quality of the case you make in demonstrating how your studio school will

- add to the choice/diversity of provision by offering a curriculum unavailable elsewhere in the area;
- offer higher standards than local schools and colleges;
- respond to parental and student need, and employers' needs; and

- make use of academy freedoms to improve standards in the local area.

You will be rated more highly if you can make a compelling case that your studio school will address most of these factors.

## **C2: Set out a clear identity for the studio school, which utilises the expertise of the employer sponsor(s)**

Free text in the Word template. You must

- include letters from the employer sponsor(s) named in the Excel application form, and any other employers you are working with, confirming what support they will offer the studio school at both the individual and organisational level before and after it opens (these letters should go in an annex).

We will assess the quality of the case your letters and application make in

- showing how the identity and operation of the studio school will be driven by the employer sponsor(s), and what those employers will do including staff and resource inputs, providing work placements or other contributions; and
- explaining what impact this will have on students, and what impact it will have on the employers' own priorities.

## Section D: Education plan

5.7 This is the heart of your application. Your education plan must explain how your studio school will achieve its education vision and set out your high level strategies. In order to describe how you will achieve your vision, you will need to describe your expected student intake; their prior attainment and circumstances; and your expectations of their achievement against the new accountability framework and qualification lists, and against any other measures of success that are important to your group.

5.8 As well as being achievable, your education plan must be affordable within the funding allocated to studio schools, and consistent with your financial plans.

5.9 In previous application rounds applicant groups have fallen short in adequately describing their education plans and have not described clearly or in sufficient detail how the studio school model will be delivered in terms of project based learning, the CREATE framework and work placements. We have therefore included an additional criterion (D2) to address these issues.

5.10 Please describe your curriculum plan for pre-16 students (**D1a**) and your curriculum plan for post-16 students (**D1b**) separately. They will be assessed separately and carry equal weight.

### **D1: An ambitious and deliverable curriculum plan for**

**(a) pre-16 students, and**

**(b) post-16 students,**

**that is consistent with the vision and pupil intake**

Free text and Word table. For both **D1a** and **D1b**, you must

- demonstrate that your proposed curriculum will be deliverable; and
- complete the table in the Word form, showing for pre-16 and for post-16
  - a list of subjects to be offered with the associated qualifications and the number of hours spent per week on each, and
  - the length of the school day, including any enrichment time, making a distinction between compulsory and voluntary activities

For both **D1a** and **D1b**, we will also assess the quality of the curriculum plan by how far it demonstrates

- an understanding of the expected pupil intake and their needs;
- your rationale for the type of curriculum proposed;
- strategies to assess and meet the needs of all pupils including looked after children, those requiring literacy recovery/intervention (including English as an additional language), the most able (gifted and talented) and those with differing degrees of SEN;
- strategies to ensure pupils make a successful transition into the studio school, and progress successfully onwards. If your curriculum plans map to entry requirements for specialist education, employment and training opportunities you have identified as progression routes, you should explain how this works;
- employer involvement in both the design and the delivery of the curriculum; and
- an appropriate enrichment programme.

For pre-16 (**D1a**) your curriculum must be broad and balanced, including English, maths, and science, and you must offer appropriate qualifications.

For post-16 (**D1b**) this should show what subjects will be covered, the range of appropriate qualifications offered and how these will meet the needs and interests of all students.



## **D2: The studio school curriculum model, project-based learning and the CREATE framework.**

Free text and table in the Word template. You must

- explain how the studio school curriculum model, project-based learning and the CREATE framework will meet the needs of students in pre- and post-16, whilst having an ambitious approach to meeting those needs;
- an explanation of how the curriculum will deliver project-based learning and work placements;
- provide examples of project briefs that are mapped against the CREATE skills framework;
- set out your plans for how you will train staff to deliver high quality project-based learning; and
- demonstrate how many employer placements have been agreed for the first year of opening at KS4 and KS5.

You will be rated more highly if

- at least 25% of employer placements have been agreed for the first year of opening, and
- this is evidenced by the letters of support from employers submitted under criterion C2.

### **D3: Measuring pupil performance effectively and setting challenging targets**

Free text in the Word template. You must

- describe how you will establish a baseline of students' current level of attainment, and of their previous levels of attainment, in order to put in place an assessment and data tracking system that will allow pupil performance to be monitored;
- have a headline set of clear, ambitious and realistic targets for pupil performance, behaviour and attendance, explaining why they are suitable to measure the delivery of your education vision, and what your strategy will be to achieve them; and
- demonstrate how you will review the success measures and targets to improve the studio school's performance.

We will also assess the quality of the case you make in demonstrating that your studio school will

- differentiate its targets for achievement and for progression according to students' current and previous levels of attainment, and use this data to inform teaching and drive achievement;
- have a clear focus on measuring and improving quality of teaching in the classroom;
- have a clear strategy to liaise with and report progress to parents; and
- have a clear focus on success in terms of progression to education, employment, and training related to the specialisms.

#### **D4: A staffing structure that will deliver the planned curriculum within the expected income levels**

Free text in the Word template. You must

- explain how you will phase your staffing structure to deliver a curriculum which is suitable to your early years of operation, while the studio school is growing towards full capacity. Provide diagrams showing the proposed staffing structure each year until full capacity (the diagrams can go in an annex);
- explain how personal coaches will be recruited, trained and used to support personalised learning for students; and
- provide an affordable, consistent staffing structure for when the studio school is at full capacity, which is sufficient to deliver the curriculum plan.

We will also assess the quality of the case you make in demonstrating that

- the staffing structure includes an appropriate balance of roles, experience and expertise e.g. senior leadership team, teachers, personal coaches, other non-teachers etc; and
- you have credible contingency plans to adapt your staffing structure if income were to be less than expected (consistent with your contingency plans in G3).

We will use your financial plans to assess whether the staffing structures you propose are affordable. You do not need to provide a commentary on affordability in this section.

## Section E: Evidence of need and marketing plans

5.11 We will assess whether there is a need for your studio school by considering the demand from employers for school leavers with the particular knowledge and skills your studio school will provide. We will also consider the demand from parents and students, including considering what other provision, in the broad specialist sectors you offer, is available in your area. We will assess your plans to market the studio school so that it is highly popular from the start and attracts a cross-section of the population. Your local authority should provide you with detailed demographic data.

5.12 We will look at the data you have provided to judge the level of need and the extent to which you have engaged with a cross section of the local community.

### **E1: Provide evidence that local employers need the workforce produced by the studio school**

Free text in the Word template. You must

- describe and quantify the national skills gap in your specialism(s) where appropriate; and
- describe and quantify the local skills gap experienced in your catchment area by
  - the employer(s) named in the Excel application form; and
  - any other employers you are working with.

You should present evidence on this local skills gap in terms of

- the employers' failure to recruit due to a lack of people with the specialist knowledge and skills your studio school will teach, using quantitative evidence; and
- any other impacts the employers experience due to this skills gap, using quantitative evidence if possible.

We will assess the quality of the case you make that employers need the workforce produced by this studio school. You will be rated more highly if

- you can describe how the skills gaps are having a significant effect on the employers you are working with; and
- you provide strong evidence that your proposal is responsive to

consultation with local employers.

## **E2: Provide evidence that students and parents need this studio school in this area**

Free text and Word table. You must

- demonstrate how many parents and students, who are of the right age to be in year 10 and year 12 in the studio school's first year of operation, have said that they will leave their current school and move to your studio school. For example, if in your first year you are intending to recruit 150 students, made up of 50 year 10s and 100 year 12s, the closer you can get to meeting (or exceeding) these numbers the higher you will be rated. You need to show that these potential students live within travelling distance of the proposed studio school, and demonstrate that they – and for pre-16 their parents – have made an informed decision to move to your studio school. Please give a clear account of how you have gathered the data (and any shortcomings in the data collection methods) such that we can verify it at interview stage if appropriate. (Please include in an annex any leaflets or material you have used with parents and students, and a map showing that the students are within travelling distance);
- describe what other provision is available at KS4 and KS5 within your catchment area, in the broad sectors of your specialisms. Provide a brief summary of the standards of that provision using Ofsted judgements and pupil achievement data; and
- tell us the proportion of NEETs in your catchment area (use LA level data if data is not available for your catchment area).

You will be rated more highly if

- you can provide evidence that a high number of parents and students of the right age have said they will leave their current school and move to your studio school; and
- the other schools and colleges offering similar specialisms/curricula are underperforming (underperforming schools will usually be classed as schools rated as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' by Ofsted. However we will also take into account pupil attainment and progression data) or there is no similar provision, or if your area has high levels of

NEETs.

### **E3: Marketing plan and engagement with the local community**

Free text in the Word template. You must

- describe the demographics of the catchment area, and the characteristics of your likely intake; and
- describe the educational context of the catchment area, including any challenging or favourable aspects which will influence the ways in which you need to market the studio school to students and parents (e.g. the extent of any current or forecast shortage (basic need) or surplus of places within the area; a three-tier system; a selective system; any reputational challenges faced by any sponsors; or whether the local authority has committed to promoting the studio school).

We will also assess the quality of the case you make in demonstrating

- how you will address each of the challenges in your educational context, including the activities and resources planned;
- how the marketing plan will ensure that the studio school has a good gender balance and is attractive to students of all abilities; and
- how the marketing plan will ensure that the studio school is as diverse as its catchment, by addressing the needs of the specific groups you have described.

## Section F: Capacity and capability

5.13 You must demonstrate that your group has the capacity and capability to set up and run a studio school, and that all of the sponsor organisations in section A (in the Excel application form) will shoulder part of the work.

5.14 If you are an approved academy sponsor the department will already hold material that would be relevant to your studio school application. **As a result at this point do not fill in sections F5 and F6 of the application form relating to your educational track record until we have assessed whether we have enough information on these aspects of your performance.** If required, we will make sure that we give you sufficient time to provide any clarification or additional material to help us take a view in regard to these factors.

5.15 In addition if you are not an approved academy sponsor but are interested in finding out more about this role and potentially apply to become a sponsor please make contact with the department's [Sponsor Approval team](#). It is important to make clear that approval as an academy sponsor will not guarantee a studio school application is approved. Each studio school application is considered against the criteria set out in this guidance. Similarly, approval to deliver a studio school project does not mean that you would be automatically chosen to deliver a specific academy project. All projects are carefully considered on a case-by-case basis. It is the role of the department to consider which of our sponsors will provide the best possible solution for a particular school(s), and Ministers will make a final decision as to whether the proposed sponsor should take forward a specific project, based on that advice.

5.16 In section F we ask you to provide details of the organisational contributions employers and other partners will commit to the studio school in pre-opening and once open. You should include, for each organisation, information on staff and resource inputs, work placements, or other contributions. This information should be quantifiable.

5.17 Throughout section F, we ask you to provide details of educational, financial, and other expertise. When we ask this, please include the following information for **each individual who is part of your group (including all members of your academy trust)** or whose expertise you intend to access. Please use the template CV provided in the Word application form.

- All individuals. Please provide



- brief details of last three roles (organisation, position, dates). This should cover the last four years. If not, please include additional roles; and
- a brief commentary on why their previous experience is relevant for this proposed studio school, and **optionally** any other brief comments they wish to make on how their role(s) had an impact on raising standards.
- **Educational expertise and experience.** Please also provide
  - **track record** across those last three roles in terms of Best 8 value-added scores if available, 5A\*-C GCSE including English and maths results (for KS4), and average point score per entry and per student for level 3 qualifications (for KS5).
    - If they are/were a member of a school or college leadership team, please provide the results for their **school/college** compared to **local and national** averages for the years they were in post.
    - If they are/were a teacher or head of department but not a member of the leadership team, the results for their **department** compared to the averages for their **school/college**.
- **Financial expertise and experience.** For the group's nominated finance lead, please also provide
  - details of their professional financial qualifications.
- **Expertise in analysing and challenging performance data to drive improvement.** This could be from any governance and leadership background (business, school, or other). Please also provide
  - *if possible*: quantified track record (using whatever metrics are appropriate) across last three roles.
- **Other expertise.** Section F also asks you to provide information on individuals in your group who have other relevant skills and expertise that will ensure the success of your proposed studio school. This may include communications, marketing, human resources and project management expertise. There are no specific requirements for these areas but please provide CVs on the template provided for these individuals including
  - a brief commentary outlining their previous experience and why this is relevant for the proposed studio school;
  - *if possible*: quantified **track record** data (using whatever metrics are appropriate) across the last three roles;
  - details of any relevant qualifications.

5.18 F1 and F2 are composed of three tables showing the **organisational contributions, time commitments and expertise**, and the **skills gap**, which you have for pre-opening (F1) and post-opening (F2), plus a CV template in the annexes for individuals' track record. The organisational contributions and the skills and experience tables cover pre and post opening, so that you do not need to repeat the details of the organisations and individuals that will be involved both before and after opening. (Likewise, the CV template should only be filled out once for each individual.) Although the majority of your trustees/directors/governors will be involved both pre- and post-opening, you may have some organisations or individuals who are (for instance) only involved pre-opening, if they are contributing a particular skill or piece of work. These should be shown on the same table – just leave the irrelevant columns blank.

### **F1: The necessary experience and credentials to deliver the studio school to opening**

Word tables only. For F1 we will only assess these tables, including the **CV template(s)** you will include in an annex, so do not use up your page limit on other text.

Using the **organisational table**, you must

- demonstrate how employers and other sponsor organisations will contribute to the establishment of the studio school, including the input from additional staff not included in the time and expertise table and the expertise that will be available in the areas of curriculum planning, delivering employer projects and providing opportunities for young people.

Using the **time and expertise** table, you must

- demonstrate that you have access to adequate relevant education and finance expertise with specific and sufficient time commitments; and
- demonstrate that you have access to individuals with sufficient time and relevant experience in some of the following:
  - Managing school finances,
  - Leadership,
  - Project management,
  - Marketing,
  - Human resources, and
  - Engaging employers and universities in school-age education.

You will be rated more highly if the individuals listed have a strong track record (shown in the CV template) in their areas of expertise, and if you have individuals with expertise in most of the six additional areas listed above.

Using the **skills gaps** table, you must

- Describe any skills you think you will need that your group does not yet have, and describe any areas where you think your group does not yet have enough time committed; and
- Explain your plans to fill these gaps.

You will be rated more highly if you have a compelling strategy to fill the skills gaps you have identified.

**F2: The governors (company directors, trustees), in collaboration with sponsor organisations, have the experience, track record, and commitment to drive improvement in a studio school and manage the trust effectively.**

Word tables only. For F2 we will only assess these tables, so do not use up your page limit on other text.

Using the **organisational table**, you must

- demonstrate how employers and other sponsor organisations will contribute to the running of the studio school once open, including the input from additional staff not included in the time and expertise table and the expertise that will be available in the areas of curriculum planning, delivering employer projects and providing opportunities for young people.

Using the **time and expertise** table, you must

- demonstrate that you have trustees/directors/governors with relevant expertise, with specific and sufficient time commitments, in **at least two of the following three** skill sets:
  - Educational expertise,
  - Financial expertise, and
  - Expertise in analysing and challenging performance data to drive improvement. This could be from any governance and leadership background (business, school, or other).

You will be rated more highly if the individuals listed have a strong track record in their areas of expertise.

Using the **skills gaps** table, you must

- describe any skills you think you will need that your group does not yet have, and describe any areas where you think your group does not yet have enough time committed; and
- explain your plans to fill these gaps.

You will be rated more highly if you have a compelling strategy to fill the skills gaps you have identified.

### **F3: A governance structure, roles and responsibilities that will ensure accountability and effective decision making in this academy trust and drive improvement in the studio school**

Free text in the Word template. You must

- provide a diagram showing your proposed governance structure, including lines of accountability between the company members, the studio school's trustees/directors/governors, and the principal (the diagram can go in an annex). The governance structure must be in line with the model studio school Articles of Association and the Academies Financial Handbook, with a clear and appropriate division of roles and responsibilities between members, governors and the studio school's senior leadership team;
- give a brief explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the company members, the trustees/directors/governors, any proposed committees, and the principal;
- explain your strategy for avoiding and minimising conflicts of interest and for securing independent challenge to members and to trustees/directors/governors; and
- give a brief description of any conflicts of interest and an explanation of how you intend to manage them.

We will also assess the quality of the case you make in demonstrating that the proposed governance structure, and the governing body's proposed size, will

enable effective decision making.

#### **F4: A credible plan for recruiting a high quality principal during pre-opening.**

Free text in the Word template. You must

- **either** have suggested a timeline for appointing a principal, a role description, and recruitment strategy that will attract to the studio school a principal with relevant experience and a credible track record of relevant leadership (any documents you include can go in annexes). Please provide a brief explanation of why you think you can attract a high calibre candidate to the role;
- **or** have identified a principal with a credible educational track record as a senior leader and who shows clear potential to be a competent principal of this studio school. Please provide a CV for your proposed principal in the annex. See the bullets in the introduction to section F for what to include.

The principal's salary must be affordable within the financial plan.

You will be rated more highly if you have either described an excellent recruitment strategy, with a good timeline and a compelling role description and marketing proposals, or identified a principal with an exemplary educational track record as a senior leader and who shows clear potential to be an excellent principal of this studio school.

We will use the information you provide in section G to determine whether the principal's salary will be affordable. You do not need to provide a commentary on affordability in this section.

If you are an existing provider or new applicant seeking to open more than one studio school and intend to implement a leadership model that includes an executive principal and head of school, you must provide the above information for both roles in relation to your studio school application.

## F5: Educational track record of existing providers

Free text in the Word template. If the applicant group outlined in section A includes existing educational providers of pre-19 education, for instance a school or college, we will assess their educational track record. If no such providers are involved, leave this section blank.

If the provider(s) in question is/are **an approved academy sponsor**, you do not need to provide anything except the name of the sponsor, as we already hold the information described below.

If the provider(s) in question is/are **not an approved academy sponsor** (even if they have an open academy, studio school or free school or a project in pre-opening), you must give the following information for **each provider**:

- the date and overall judgement of their latest Ofsted inspection with the link to the full report (in the Excel application form);
- links (in the Excel application form) to the most recent published performance data for each of the provider's schools or colleges. Please use the Word form to provide a brief explanation of any anomalies you think we should be aware of;
- an indication of how the school or college will provide on-going challenge and support to the proposed studio school. Where relevant, please state how the provider would source additional capacity if required; and
- **if the provider is involved with supporting other schools or colleges to improve**, please also provide a list of the key people the provider uses to furnish that support, giving brief details in line with the bullets introducing section F; details of when they have supported other schools or colleges; and references to Ofsted judgements where they have been directly responsible for a positive transformation.

We base our assessment of the capacity, capability, and quality of provision of the provider(s) on the following criteria:

- **strategic direction** - a clear understanding of what it means to be an effective school sponsor, school, or college, and clear aspirations underpinned by a sustainable business model;
- **educational capacity and performance** - evidence of sustainable educational impact and school/college improvement capacity;
- **financial planning and operational capacity** - evidence of robust financial planning and expertise, value for money and risk management;

and

- **governance and transparency** - appropriate, tight governance structures and clear lines of accountability.

In order to be rated highly, the provider(s) must have

- a **high calibre** of educational leadership;
- **compelling** evidence of high, sustained educational impact, measured by
  - KS4 results data, including absolute results, trajectories above national averages (and KS2 results if the provider runs primary provision),
  - Best 8 value added scores, compared with LA and national averages,
  - Ofsted S5 judgements of quality of teaching, leadership and management are on average, 'outstanding', and
  - individuals' track record, including results in previous schools/colleges, value added (as above) and Ofsted track record.

## **F6: Capacity to expand (existing providers and any new applicants seeking to open more than one school)**

Free text and Word tables. If you already have an open academy or studio school or other educational institution, a school in pre-opening or if you are a new applicant applying for more than one school, we will test your capacity to expand/open multiple schools. If this does not apply to you, leave this section blank.

If you are an **approved academy sponsor**, we already hold all this information and you do not need to provide anything.

If you are **not an approved academy sponsor** (even if you have an open school/college or a school in pre-opening), you must

- provide evidence of relevant financial expertise at sponsor/trust level as set out in the bullets introducing section F;
- provide a brief outline of the financial performance of your school/academy/trust/institution during the last 4 years, including details

of any adverse audit opinions from any sources;

- include the name of your Finance Director, their type and level of qualification and a brief summary of his/her recent/past employment as set out in the bullets introducing section F;
- provide an explanation of your existing and planned internal and external financial management and governance arrangements, including for scrutiny and challenge;
- set out sustainable and realistic growth plans for your MAT (if you have or are proposing a MAT);
- provide a credible plan to provide support and challenge to the new school(s); and
- explain how you plan to get efficiencies and economies of scale by sharing services across your schools.

If your group is proposing to make use of a shared service function (either through a multi-academy trust, sponsor or other related organisation), you must also provide

- the projected make-up of the 'central team' and their approximate cost. Please include the details set out in the bullets in the introduction to section F in terms of education and finance to demonstrate how they can support the new school(s) through pre-opening and beyond for anyone not already covered in other parts of section F;
- a list of any additional skills and expertise within the shared service function that you have not already explained in other parts of section F. Please include details as set out in the introduction to section F for education and finance;
- a brief description of how your shared service function will be financed. This should include which services are provided by the shared service function, what the costs are likely to be to each institution (e.g. top-slice/per-head contribution) and what this funding will provide. Please complete the table in the application form;
- a list of any additional services which can be purchased by each institution if the (local) governing body decides and the approximate costs of these additional services;
- an explanation of who will monitor the performance of the shared service function and how;
- a brief outline of how your current capacity will grow to match your



ambition for the trust and how you intend to finance the growth of the trust.

This information should be sufficiently detailed to allow us to make an assessment of both the capacity and capability and the value for money of the shared service provision.

We will also assess the quality of the evidence you can provide in relation to

- your improvement plans and how you provide the appropriate scrutiny to every school;
- contingency planning and risk management;
- capacity and capability to intervene quickly across all areas of the school;
- high calibre financial leadership;
- robust financial track record and good value for money; and
- whether the school will benefit from support and challenge from a highly skilled, focused local governing body, with the necessary delegated authority to carry out its functions.

You will be rated more highly if you have **compelling** evidence demonstrating that you have good plans in place to meet **most** of the points above.

## Section G: Budget planning and affordability

5.19 We want to ensure that your studio school is financially viable within the funding available. Before you begin to develop and complete your plans, you should read the overview of school funding which explains the different types of funding available. Detailed guidance on completing the budget template can be found in the guidance tab of the Excel budget spreadsheet.

5.20 We first ask you to provide a budget plan showing your income and expenditure as your studio school grows to full capacity. We want to check that your financial plans will support delivery of your education vision and plan and that your studio school is viable with the funding provided. We then ask you to explain what changes you would make if you had to operate with only 70% of your expected income each year until your school reaches a steady state, due to lower than expected student numbers. We want to make sure your school is resilient to changes in income as a result of having fewer pupils than expected. You must show how you made 30% savings for each year up to and including the year your school reaches steady state. You do not need to submit a 70% budget plan in the Excel budget template but you will need to think about areas where you can make savings and explain these in the Word application form. It is critical that you include the savings that each change will generate, the rationale for each change that you propose and the reason you have prioritised the changes as you have.

### **G1: Accurate financial plans that are consistent with the rest of the application and based on realistic assumptions about income and expenditure**

Excel budget template plus free text in Word. You must

- include an overview explanation in section G of the Word application form of how you developed your plans and the strategic decisions underpinning them. As part of this, you should briefly explain how you would deliver value for money, and describe how your budget plan would support delivery of your education vision and plan;
- complete a budget plan showing income and planned expenditure in the Excel template and include the assumptions made about income and expenditure in the space provided. You should explain clearly what you have based your assumptions on and the evidence you have to show these are realistic and appropriate;
- make sure that the information in your plan is consistent with the other parts of your application e.g. the staffing structure and pupil numbers in the education plan should agree with the budget plan;
- demonstrate that no material errors have been made in completing the

financial plan; and

- show that you have allowed for unexpected costs and have contingencies.

We will also assess the quality of the case you make in demonstrating that the strategic financial decisions you have taken in preparing your plan are reasonable, represent good value for money and are prudent. We will look at

- core operating income / expenditure assumptions;
- benchmarking information for income and expenditure;
- contingencies;
- any centrally provided services and their costs;
- proportion of spend allocated to each budget area – and particularly to staffing;
- staff to pupil ratios;
- the context of the area (e.g. the percentage of FSM and SEN pupils); and
- the studio school's particular education offer (e.g. specialist teaching).

If you are invited to interview, we will assess how well you answer financial scrutiny questions.

## **G2: The studio school will be viable within the expected levels of funding available both during the post opening period and once at full capacity**

Excel budget template plus free text in Word. You must

- demonstrate that the studio school is projected to at least break even once at full capacity;
- not show a cumulative deficit in any year. Any in-year deficits during the period when student numbers are ramping up must be planned for by accumulating a surplus in (a) previous year(s); and
- not be dependent on borrowing or third party income to break even in any year: your eventual studio school could depend on some third-party income (for instance from apprenticeships) but this would need to be thoroughly documented during pre-opening, and at the application stage, you should not count on having this income.

We will also assess the quality of the case you make in demonstrating how you have made the decisions you have regarding the levels of in year deficit and overall surplus, looking at the factors set out under G1.

### **G3: The studio school will be financially resilient to reductions in income**

Free text and Word table. You must

- include an overview explanation in Section G of the Word application form of how you approached making 30% savings and your rationale for suggesting the changes that you have. You must show how you made 30% savings for each year up to and including the year your school reaches steady state. As part of this, you should explain how your amended plans would continue to support delivery of your education vision and plan; and
- complete the table to explain how you would deliver your vision and plan if your income was 70% of what you had expected. To do this, you should explain the actions you would take to reduce costs, the reasons for these actions and the approximate savings that would result. These savings should total the 30%.

We will also assess the quality of the case you make in demonstrating

- that the changes proposed will result in an education plan which is affordable, will minimise compromises to quality and will meet the vision for the studio school; and
- that the changes outlined in the 70% table have taken into account the particular characteristics of your studio school.

NB: The Excel budget template will provide you with a figure for the required saving. For the purpose of this exercise we assume your entire income – including any lump sum which may be payable in your area – is reduced by 30%.

## Section H: Premises

5.21 Finding a suitable site is an essential part of opening a studio school. As part of preparing your application you should investigate potential sites for your studio school and tell us about them in your application

5.22 There are no assessment criteria for this section, although we make a value for money judgement on each application that includes likely site costs.

5.23 You must

- complete the Excel application form with details of your preferred sites. For each site, this asks you for
  - the details of your preferred location,
  - the full address and postcode,
  - details of how you found the site,
  - the tenure and ownership plus purchase/lease cost if known,
  - confirmation of LA support for use of a site, if applicable,
  - confirmation of availability,
  - an outline of its current use,
  - your reasons for choosing it and its suitability,
  - size of site and building, if known,
  - comments on the condition of the building.

5.24 Additionally, please provide any site plans, agent's particulars, photos, catchment/location maps or other associated technical information as annexes. All supporting text information on sites must be included in the Excel application form.

5.25 You should make enquiries as to whether your preferred sites are available for acquisition or leasehold but you **must not** enter into any negotiations at this or any other stage. If your application is approved, the Education Funding Agency (EFA) will undertake negotiations to lease or acquire a site for your studio school and will provide the necessary capital funding for the refurbishment and building works. A 125-year peppercorn lease is the department's preferred type of tenure, as it ensures long-term security for the studio school as well as value for money. Studio schools will not always require the construction of a completely new building, existing premises can be refurbished or remodelled so that they are functional and comply with all relevant legislation

5.26 Whilst it will be important to secure a site that is appropriate for your studio school, it must also offer value for money and if approved the department will seek to deliver your studio school with the lowest possible capital cost. If, after approval of your application it

proves impossible to identify a feasible site, we may have to delay the opening of your studio school or, in some cases, we may not be able to open your studio school at all. The overall capital budget for your studio school will cover site acquisition, building or refurbishment costs, including fees, surveys and legal advice, and the costs of ICT provision, standard fittings, furniture and equipment.

## 6. Support for applicants

### Useful contacts

6.1 Please find below contact details of organisations that are able to offer support:

- For general advice, please contact the Studio Schools Trust, which provides free advice and guidance to studio school applicants, on [applications@studioschoolstrust.org](mailto:applications@studioschoolstrust.org)
- Advice and guidance on how to find potential sites, as part of developing your application, is available from the EFA by contacting them by email on [FreeSchools.EFACAPITAL@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FreeSchools.EFACAPITAL@education.gsi.gov.uk) . (This is the address for premises queries and advice before you submit your application. There is a separate email address for any premises information you need to send once you have submitted your application; that email address is given in the Excel application form)

### Further information and key documents

6.2 There are a range of websites and documents that you may find useful when writing your studio school application, including the following:

[Academies Financial Handbook](#)

[Academies Spend Data \(for examples of academy finances\)](#)

[Behaviour and exclusions policies and guidance](#)

[Charity Commission guidance](#)

[Companies House](#)

[Department for Education procurement guidance for free schools](#) (this guidance includes studio schools)

[Education Funding Agency \(Capital\)](#)

[Education Funding Agency \(Revenue\)](#)

[Education Services Grant](#)

Equality Act 2010:

- [Legislation](#)
- [Advice](#)

[Governance guidance](#)

[Model studio school funding agreements](#)

[Model studio school memorandum and articles of association](#)

[Secondary School Accountability Consultation Response](#)

[School Admissions Code and School Admissions Appeals Code](#)

[Schools benchmarking website](#) (for examples of maintained school finances):

[Seven Principles of Public Life](#)

[Special Educational Needs Code of Practice](#) (this will be updated following the passage of the Children and Families Bill in 2014)



# **Annex A: Studio school funding overview and how to complete the budget planning spreadsheet**

## **Project development funding**

We will provide a project development grant to groups whose applications are approved to the next stage. This grant is to help cover everything that groups will need to buy up to the point that the studio school opens. This includes the cost of project management, education support, recruiting and paying a principal designate, pre-opening office costs and pre-opening insurance. This excludes site related costs which will be paid by the EFA.

The same total level of project development grant will apply regardless of the length your pre-opening period and will be paid in instalments.

## **School funding**

Funding is primarily allocated to schools, including studio schools, on a per pupil basis. The more pupils you have, the more funding you get. This is why proving the need for your studio school is so important. If your studio school does not have enough pupils it will be very difficult for you to pay for staff and the upkeep of your building.

All mainstream schools – including studio schools and academies – are funded based on a local funding formula. Local formulas are revised before the start of each academic year. We expect to be able to provide final details of funding arrangements in the April before the start of the academic year to which they will apply.

The information set out in the financial template is based on the 2013/14 funding figures which will be a close proxy for future funding rates. However, you should note that information set out below and in the template is illustrative only. No guarantee can be given that the levels of funding set out in the template will be received when your school opens.

If your application is approved, you will be expected to revise your budgets as your plans develop to reflect any changes to the funding arrangements when they are known ahead of entering into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State and in order for your indicative funding letter to be calculated and issued.

## Post-opening funding

Most new studio schools receive additional funding to reflect the additional costs of establishing new publicly-funded schools. New schools being opened as studio schools will be provided with this funding through the post-opening grant.

The post-opening grant provides funding in two elements: per-pupil resources; and leadership diseconomies. These titles reflect the basis on which the funding is calculated.

**The first element (resources)** is paid annually as the school builds up to full capacity. It is paid at £500 for each new place created in years 10 to 13.

**The second element (leadership)** is paid annually as the studio school builds up to full capacity. The amount paid each year currently depends on how many students are present compared to the eventual full capacity of the studio school. The funding should only be used to help cover the salary costs of the minimum **essential** senior leadership posts. Groups should also be aware that if they can break even without using the full amount of Post Opening Grant they will be expected to do so.

Post opening funding is reviewed periodically to ensure value for money so these figures should be used as indicative only.

## Completing the budget planning spreadsheet

The information set out in the financial template is based on the 2013/14 funding figures which will be a close proxy for future funding rates.

The financial template is a tool to help you to demonstrate that the education plan and staffing structure proposed throughout the application is affordable within the funding available from the EFA. It is important that it is consistent with the rest of the application, that you use it to demonstrate how your plans will be made a reality and that your assumptions clearly show what strategic financial decisions you have made. If you are successful, you will be asked to update this tool as your plans develop throughout the pre-opening phase.

You should refer to the Academies Financial Handbook in planning your budget. For example, forecasts should be prepared on the 'accruals' basis of accounting, which means that you should recognise expenditure in the accounting period in which it is incurred, which may be earlier than when the invoice is actually paid.

Instructions for completing the financial template can be found in the guidance tab of the Excel budget spreadsheet.

## Annex B: Glossary of terms

**Academies Financial Handbook** - sets out the duties and obligations of academy trusts which have a funding agreement with the Secretary of State, including in respect of financial management, governance and audit.

**Academy** - publicly funded independent educational institution free from local authority control. Studio schools are legally academies. Other freedoms include setting their own pay and conditions for staff, freedom from following the national curriculum and the ability to change the lengths of their terms and school days.

**Academy trust** - a charitable company limited by guarantee which operates an academy or free school. See 'company limited by guarantee' for further information.

**Articles of association** - set out the purpose, composition and operating arrangements of the company limited by guarantee (the academy trust).

**Catchment area** - the geographical area which you intend your school to serve.

**Collective worship** - all schools must provide a daily act of collective worship. For schools that do not have a religious designation, daily acts of collective worship should be of a broadly Christian nature.

**Company limited by guarantee** - a private company, where the liabilities of its members are limited, in the case of academy trusts to £10. This is the type of company that will most often be used for non-profit organisations. As a legal entity in its own right a company limited by guarantee can take out agreements and contracts in the name of the company rather than the name of individual members.

**Devolved formula capital** - funding for the maintenance and repairs of school buildings. Studio schools will not receive this funding in their first year.

**Directors** - are appointed by the members of a company to form a governing body and oversee the day-to-day management of the school. All individuals on the governing body must be formally appointed as directors of the company and registered with Companies House. It is possible for an individual to be a member and a director but we would expect most directors of the company not to be members. The directors will be the trustees of the charitable company.

**Due diligence** - is an umbrella term for a number of checks that will be made on all those applying to establish a studio school. The checks enable us to ensure that only suitable individuals are able to set up and run a studio school.

**Education Funding Agency (EFA)** - the EFA (formed from the Young People's Learning Agency and Partnerships for Schools in April 2012) is part of the Department for Education. It currently funds all academies, maintained schools through local authorities,

other training for 16 to 19s and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities between the ages of 16 and 25. Studio schools may also want to offer apprenticeships or higher education courses such as HNCs, which are not funded by the EFA, and can do so with DfE's approval. Your project would then need to secure permission and revenue funding from the appropriate bodies, and comply with relevant monitoring regimes.

**Education services grant (ESG)** – this grant is for central education services currently funded through local authority central spend equivalent. The ESG will be allocated on a simple per-pupil basis to local authorities and academies according to the number of pupils for whom they are responsible. This is a separate grant proportionate to the number of pupils for which they are responsible.

**English Baccalaureate** - where pupils have secured a C grade or better in all of English, mathematics, history or geography, two sciences and a language.

**Escalation (methods of)** - the approach to and level of responsibility at which particular issues will be resolved when setting up and running the school.

**Ethos** - the distinctive vision, values and principles that inform the way a school is run.

**Financial viability** - whether a school can survive in financial terms in the long-term. Studio schools must be able to balance their budgets. This means spending less than their income. In the post-opening period, income is currently per pupil funding plus an additional post-opening grant. When schools reach steady state, their income will be per pupil funding only.

**Founding members of the company** - these are the people that establish the company and sign the memorandum of association that is submitted (with the company's articles of association) when registering the company with Companies House. Further members may subsequently be appointed.

**Free school meals (FSM)** - whether children are, or have ever been, eligible for free school meals is frequently used as an indicator of deprivation, and is often used as a qualifier for calculating funding targeted at deprived students/areas/schools. No additional FSM funding is given for children aged 16 to 19.

**Full time equivalent (FTE)** - this represents the total pupil load as if all pupils are full-time, counting part-time normally as 0.5. So for example if the school will have 100 full-time pupils and 30 part-time pupils the FTE total would be 115. This is also relevant to staffing.

**Funding agreement** - a legally binding contract between the academy trust and the Secretary of State that sets out the conditions and requirements upon which the academy trust is funded.

**General Annual Grant (GAG)** - otherwise known as 'per pupil funding', this is an academy's annual expected funding. Schools are expected to cover all their running costs out of their GAG.

**Governors** - see definition for 'Directors' above.

**Governing body** - the body appointed by the members of the academy trust to oversee the day-to-day management of the school and hold the senior management team to account. The governing body must be constituted in accordance with the academy trust's Articles of Association. Governors must be registered as directors of the company with Companies House.

**Grant funding** - a method of giving funds for a specific purpose and/or a limited amount of time.

**Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** - this includes telephony, computer equipment and operating systems for the running of the school. It also covers the use of ICT in the curriculum as a subject and to support teaching and learning.

**Indicative funding** - gives a school an estimated funding quote for the forthcoming academic year. It is based on the average local authority funding for maintained schools and the expected number of pupils on roll at that school in the relevant year.

**Leadership grant** - staffing element of post-opening grant.

**Looked-after-children** - children who are in the care of the local authority.

**Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)** - a nationwide public sector pension scheme administered locally for participating employers through 99 regional pension funds. Studio schools must offer this scheme to all their non-teaching staff.

**Members (of the company)** - the company's legal owners. They are responsible for appointing directors of the studio school (the 'governing body').

**Memorandum of association** - contains the names of the individuals who are forming the company (the company's founding members). It indicates their willingness to become a member of the company under the Companies Act 2006.

**Pedagogy** - different styles and approaches to teaching.

**Post-opening grant** - previously called 'start-up funding' this is additional funding currently available when schools are first set up (and before there is a full cohort of pupils) for essential costs such as employing a principal (head teacher) and buying books and equipment.

**Post-opening period** - the number of years taken for the studio school to build up to capacity, agreed between the studio school academy trust and department.

**Procurement** - the process of entering into contracts for the acquisition of goods and/or services.

**Project development funding** - funding provided to help set up the school before it opens. It can currently be used to help develop detailed plans for the school including the curriculum, recruiting a principal designate, running a consultation on the proposed school, and attracting pupils.

**Pupil premium** - additional funding allocated to schools for children who are eligible for free school meals. Children who had been continuously looked after for six months will also attract the Pupil premium. A premium has also been introduced for children whose parents are currently serving in the armed forces; this was £250 in 2012-13 and rose to £300 for 2013-14. This service premium is designed to address the emotional and social well-being of these pupils. 16 to 19 pupils do not receive pupil premium funding.

**Qualified teacher status (QTS)** - the accreditation that enables individuals to teach in state-maintained and special schools in England and Wales.

**Religious education (RE)** - all schools must teach religious education. The RE curriculum must reflect that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of other principal religions in the country.

**School action and school action plus** - programmes for children with special educational needs who are not 'statemented'.

**School Admissions Code and School Admissions Appeals Code** – schools must comply with the School Admissions Code which is a statutory document we publish that ensures equity and fair access for all.

**Special educational needs (SEN)** - Children with a learning difficulty which requires additional, or otherwise different, educational provision than is offered more generally for children of their age.

**Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)** - the SENCo plays a key role, in collaboration with the headteacher and governing body, in determining the strategic development of the SEN policy and provision in the school in order to raise the achievement of children with SEN. The SENCo takes day-to-day responsibility for the provision made for individual children with SEN, working closely with staff, parents and carers, and other agencies. The SENCo also provides related professional guidance to colleagues with the aim of securing high quality teaching for children with SEN.

**Service children** - children whose parents are in the armed forces. A premium has been introduced for children whose parents are currently serving in the armed forces; this was £250 in 2012-13 and rose to £300 for 2013-14. This service premium is designed to address the emotional and social well-being of these pupils.

**Solvency/insolvency** - a company or individual is solvent if the value of its assets exceeds the value of any debts it might owe. Insolvency occurs when a company or individual's debts exceed their assets, or if a company or individual has insufficient funds available to meet its debts as they fall due.

**Statements of special educational needs** - a statement describes a child's special educational needs and the special help a child should receive. The LA will usually make a statement if it decides, following a statutory assessment, that all the special help a child needs cannot be provided from within the school's resources. These resources could include money, staff time and special equipment. The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice will be re-issued following the passage of the Children and Families Bill in 2014. All mainstream schools will be under a duty to admit children and young people where the school is named in an Education, Health and Care plan.

**Statutory assessment of SEN** - a detailed investigation to find out exactly what a child's special educational needs are and what special help a child needs. A statutory assessment is only necessary if the school or early education setting cannot provide all the help that the child needs.

**Steady state** - the first year after you have reached full capacity in terms of pupil numbers.

**Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS)** - a contributory scheme administered by Teachers' Pensions (TP) on behalf of the Department for Education. Studio schools must offer this scheme to all their teachers, including head teachers.

**University Technical Colleges (UTCs)** - newly-established 14-19 academies that deliver technical education to engage young people and meet the needs of modern business. UTCs are sponsored by a local university and industry partner(s). They offer full time courses that combine practical and academic studies, and focus on disciplines requiring highly specialised equipment, for example, engineering, manufacturing with product design, construction, or agriculture. A link to the UTC website is [here](#).

**Value for money (VfM)** - the term used to assess whether or not an organisation has obtained the maximum benefit from the goods and services it acquires and/or provides, within the resources available to it. It not only measures the cost of goods and services, but also takes account of the mix of quality, fitness for purpose, timeliness and convenience.



Department  
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